

Statistics Weekly

Thursday, 2 May 1991

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IAN CASTLES
Australian Statistician

Small increase in building materials prices

Prices for materials used in house building increased by 0.1 per cent in February 1991 as did prices for materials used in other than house building.

Over the year to February, prices for house building materials increased by 4.9 per cent and prices for materials used in other areas of building increased by 5.1 per cent. These increases continued the downward trend evident over recent periods.

The main house building price increases in February were for ready mixed concrete and aluminium windows, while prices decreased for structural timber.

For materials used in buildings other than houses, the main price increases were for air conditioning equipment, ready mixed concrete and sand, aggregate and filling. These increases were largely offset by decreases in reinforcing steel and conductors.

PRICES OF BUILDING MATERIALS, FEBRUARY 1991
Percentage change

City	House building		Other than house building	
	From previous month	From corresponding month of previous year	From previous month	From corresponding month of previous year
Sydney	-0.2	5.5	-0.1	5.4
Melbourne	0.1	3.4	0.3	4.8
Brisbane	0.3	5.9	0.2	4.1
Adelaide	-0.1	4.9	-0.2	4.9
Perth	0.1	5.9	0.2	5.4
Hobart	0.5	4.9	0.1	3.8
Weighted average of six State capitals	0.1	4.9	0.1	5.1
Darwin	— Not available —		1.4	5.9
Canberra	-0.2	4.2	0.3	6.1

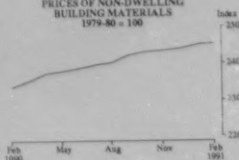
For further information, order the publications *Price Index of Materials Used in House Building, Six State Capital Cities and Canberra (6408.0)* and *Price Index of Materials Used in Building Other Than House Building, Eight Capital Cities (6407.0)*, or contact Kim Tobin on (06) 252 6198.

Slump in new vehicle registrations extends to March

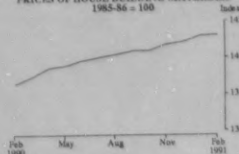
While unadjusted total new motor vehicle registrations increased by 1.2 per cent (to 39,880) in March 1991, in seasonally adjusted terms, there was a decline of 9.4 per cent between February and March 1991. New car and station wagon registrations fell by the same percentage while other vehicles declined by 9.1 per cent in seasonally adjusted terms.

Continued ...

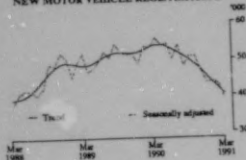
PRICES OF NON-DWELLING BUILDING MATERIALS
1979-80 = 100



PRICES OF HOUSE BUILDING MATERIALS
1985-86 = 100



NEW MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATIONS



As a result, the trend estimate for total new vehicle registrations fell by 3.6 per cent, with cars and station wagons falling by 3.4 per cent and other vehicles declining by 4.5 per cent.

There have been eleven consecutive months of decline in the trend estimates for total new vehicle registrations. The March 1991 figure was 25 per cent below the trend estimate for March 1990, as was the decline in new car and station wagon registrations over the same period.

For further information, order the publication *Registrations of New Motor Vehicles, Australia, Preliminary (9301.0)*, or contact Kevin Yeaton on (06) 252 6255.

Manufacturing input prices show fourth successive fall

The price index of materials used in manufacturing industries fell by 3.3 per cent in February 1991.

The decrease, like those in the previous three months, was again mainly due to lower prices for imported and domestic crude petroleum, reflecting the continuing decrease in world oil prices.

Prices for home produced materials recorded a decrease of 4.0 per cent in February. The decrease was caused mainly by decreased prices for domestic crude petroleum although this was partly offset by higher prices for live animals and other agricultural materials.

The decrease for imported materials of 1.8 per cent also resulted mainly from lower prices for crude petroleum and condensates.

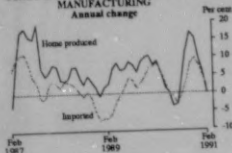
Over the year to February prices of manufacturing materials increased by 0.6 per cent. This small annual increase was also caused largely by movements in world oil prices.

The table below shows the impact of these price movements on imported and home produced materials.

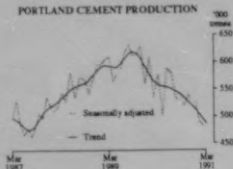
PRICE INDEXES OF MATERIALS USED IN MANUFACTURING, FEBRUARY 1991
Percentage change

Source of material	From previous month	From corresponding month of previous year
Imported	-1.8	1.6
Home produced	-4.0	0.0
All manufacturing	-3.3	0.6

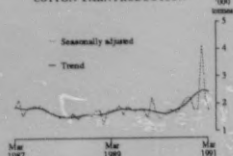
For further information, order the publication *Price Indexes of Materials Used in Manufacturing Industries, Australia (6411.0)*, or contact Geoff Brown on (06) 252 5348.

PRICE INDEX OF MATERIALS USED IN MANUFACTURING
Annual change

PORTLAND CEMENT PRODUCTION



COTTON YARN PRODUCTION



Manufacturing in March ...

The publication *Manufacturing Production, Australia, Preliminary* (8301.0) contains up-to-date time series data on the production of twenty-seven major indicators of production. These indicator commodities have been specially selected to give a broad industry representation of the manufacturing sector and are part of a much larger range of commodity items published in the series of ten Manufacturing Production Bulletins.

The preliminary publication contains short time series for commodities and should be consulted to obtain a clearer view of production trends as the production of manufacturing commodities can vary quite significantly on a month-to-month basis, even after seasonal adjustment.

In the table below, the 'previous year' column is a rather more reliable guide, but even it should be treated with some caution unless read in conjunction with the more detailed data presented in each monthly publication.

MANUFACTURING PRODUCTION
MARCH 1991

Seasonally adjusted, percentage change

Product	From previous month	From corresponding month of previous year
Domestic refrigerators	35.4	75.9
Woven man-made fibre fabric	7.6	20.5
Cotton yarn	-21.8	18.9
Blooms and slabs	11.1	15.9
Television sets	3.7	15.0
Chocolate based confectionery	0.2	13.4
Electric motors	16.9	11.8
Domestic clothes washing machines	4.2	1.4
Cigarettes and tobacco	0.4	0.6
Electricity	-2.2	-0.5
Beer	2.2	-1.8
Other confectionery	15.1	-1.9
Woven cotton fabric (including towelling)	-18.3	-4.0
Gas available for issue through mains	-6.9	-5.7
Wool yarn	10.2	-8.9
Woven wool fabric (including blanketing)	-15.5	-10.7
Iron and steel ingots or other primary forms	-13.4	-13.2
Portland cement	1.4	-15.3
Textile floor coverings	-6.5	-15.9
Clay bricks	-6.2	-17.4
Basic iron, spiegeleisen and sponge iron	-16.9	-20.5
Petrol-rotary type lawn mowers	35.3	-22.1
Cars and station wagons	-13.9	-35.4
Motor vehicles for goods and materials	-10.3	-51.1
Sulphuric acid; oleum	-28.6	-54.5

For further information, order the publication *Manufacturing Production, Australia, Preliminary* (8301.0), or contact Kevin Squair on (06) 252 5558.

Computer online access to ABS statistical services

More immediate access to official statistical data is becoming available through the Australian Bureau of Statistics' use of current computer dissemination technologies.

The resulting ability to access newly-released statistics and the freedom to transfer and manipulate data on demand, produce major efficiency gains for ABS customers and the media.

Details of the technology advances were outlined in a paper delivered by the ABS Director of Publishing and Electronic Dissemination, Peter Darncevski, at the 'Information Online and On Disc 91' Fifth Australasian Conference and Exhibition in Sydney on 31 January.

His paper, *Meeting Information Needs via Online Databases and CD-ROM: A Perspective from the ABS*, focused on electronic dissemination techniques and delivery mechanisms being used or under development in the ABS to better serve its clients.

Mr Darncevski said the ABS exploited all major avenues for the dissemination of statistics and releases data in many forms to satisfy the diversity of statistics-user requirements. These include publications, microfiche, computer readable media and online electronic access.

He said while the Bureau's more than 500 separate publications a year were still the major dissemination method of statistical findings, computer online services were rapidly becoming the acceptable means for quick delivery of vital information.

The ABS operates three online services — DISCOVERY, a videotex service administered by Telecom; AUSSTATS which provides access to a range of up-to-date ABS data by way of a publicly accessible computing network; and the ABS TELESTATS system which utilises the opportunities offered by Telecom's electronic mail systems for delivery of statistical information.

DISCOVERY is used by the ABS to display summary statistics relating to the main economic indicator range of releases plus other selected statistics.

The advantage of this display technology is that it can be simultaneously accessed by a large customer base. It is ideal for making available summaries or key features of statistics immediately upon, or shortly after, their release, for viewing and or printing on a user's microcomputer. In 1989-90 there were more than 160,000 separate accesses for data at costs between 20c and \$1.

AUSSTATS consists of a time series data base with software providing a comprehensive range of facilities for storing, retrieving, manipulating and displaying the data.

It offers about 60,000 time series. Most are monthly or quarterly and span 10 or more years covering important economic and social statistics. The AUSSTATS database is updated on a daily basis. New data is released on AUSSTATS at the same time as the corresponding publication is released to the media and for over-the-counter sales at ABS offices.

Statistics Weekly

Synopsis of articles, April 1991

11 April 1991

Record exports help lower current account deficit

In seasonally adjusted terms, the current account deficit for February 1991 fell \$210 million to \$1,434 million. The fall was caused mainly by a \$136 million increase in the merchandise trade surplus and an increase of \$85 million in the net unrequited transfers surplus.

Job vacancies still falling

The seasonally adjusted estimated number of job vacancies fell 24.2 per cent from 35,400 in November 1990 to 26,900 in February 1991. The February figure is a decrease of 52.3 per cent on February 1990 and it is the lowest estimate since the series was introduced in November 1983, when there were 30,100 vacancies.

Building materials prices increase

Prices for house building materials increased by 0.6 per cent, while materials used in other than house building showed an increase of 0.5 per cent in January 1991.

Housing approvals fall again

Total dwelling unit approvals fell by 2.9 per cent, in seasonally adjusted terms, between January and February 1991 with private sector house approvals falling by 3.3 per cent.

Lower oil prices continue to bring down manufacturing input costs

The price index of materials used in manufacturing industries fell by 2.5 per cent in January 1991. The decrease was mainly due to lower prices for imported and domestic crude petroleum, reflecting the continuing decrease in world oil prices.

Employee earnings profile released

Preliminary results from the May 1990 Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours have just been released. They provide a snapshot of the distribution and composition of employee earnings and hours classified by sex, adult/junior, sector, industry and major occupation groups.

Customised information from ABS information consultants ...

The introduction of the Australian Bureau of Statistics Information Service revolutionised the way in which ABS clients accessed information, and provided a far more effective relationship between the ABS and its clients.

... plus top quality advice for your statistical projects

The Statistical Consultancy service is one of the more specialised services available from the ABS. This service offers clients access to the experience and expertise of professional statisticians in the ABS. It provides high quality and independent advice and assistance.

Industrial disputes down sharply

In December 1990, 54 industrial disputes were reported, resulting in the loss of 31,500 working days. This is a substantial decrease from November 1990 when 126 disputes cost 178,800 working days.

Migrants in the labour force

The number of migrants who arrived in Australia after 1970, aged 18 years or over on arrival and who had obtained permanent residency status was estimated to be 1,158,900 at September 1990.

Synopsis of articles, April 1991 – *continued*

18 April 1991

Earnings rise

Final estimates for November 1990 show an increase in average weekly ordinary time earnings of 2.7 per cent for full-time adults to \$555.60, up from \$541.00 in August 1990.

Labour market weakens further

The March 1991 labour force survey confirmed a further weakening of the labour market. There were significant falls in employment, and labour force participation, and a sharp rise in unemployment, compared with the February seasonally adjusted estimates.

Re-financing boosts January business finance

Business finance commitments (i.e. commercial finance and lease finance commitments) in January 1991 were at the highest level, \$9,248.8 million, since May 1990.

Retail trend remains weak

Trend estimates of retail turnover continue to indicate weak growth. The average increase at current prices for the three months ended February is 0.2 per cent per month, the same as the average monthly increase over the last year. The annual increase (February 1991 over February 1990) is now 2.8 per cent.

Wine improves with time

After a lengthy decline, from a peak of 28.3 million litres in December 1987 to a low of 23.8 million litres in March 1990, the trend estimate for domestic sales of Australian wines by winemakers has improved and since August 1990 appears to have stabilised at around 25.3 million litres per month.

26 April 1991

Job search experience — the pattern is changing

A belief that 'there were no vacancies at all' was most frequently reported as the main difficulty experienced by unemployed persons in finding work, in July 1990. Of the 548,300 persons looking for work, 17 per cent were in this category, and their average duration of unemployment was 36 weeks. The 'no vacancies' difficulty has declined from 28 per cent in July 1980.

Trend still falling for motor vehicle registrations

The trend estimate for new motor vehicle registrations fell by 2.2 per cent in February 1991, continuing the decline since April 1990. Car and station wagon registrations were down by 2.0 per cent while 'other' vehicles dropped by 2.8 per cent. Registrations were down by 1.9 per cent in seasonally adjusted terms (although there was a rise of 7.4 per cent in unadjusted registrations).

Export prices continue to fall

Export prices fell by 1.0 per cent between January and February 1991, putting them 4 per cent below the level of February 1990.

Housing finance value up but dwelling numbers down

Seasonally adjusted housing finance commitments for February 1991 were \$1,633.7 million, an increase of \$42.0 million (2.6%) over January 1991 but still \$113.5 million (6.5%) below February 1990. Despite the general increase in the value of commitments ... [there was] an overall decrease of 1.0 per cent in the number of dwelling units for which commitments were made.

Sheep slaughterings continue to rise

Sheep slaughterings for human consumption continued to increase in February 1991 with a rise of 6.6 per cent over the exceptionally high figure for January. The February figure of 1,927,400 was 19.3 per cent higher than in the same month last year. In the eight months to February 1991 there were 17.6 per cent more sheep slaughtered than in the same period a year earlier.

Continued from page i

The electronic mail services used by TELESTATS provide an excellent conduit by which statistical information can be delivered directly for manipulation, modelling and analysis. Also the material can be delivered to individually identified users through multiple access mail boxes.

Unlike the DISCOVERY delivery mechanism, TELESTATS is capable of delivering detailed statistical tables and textual material such as explanatory notes. The ABS commenced its TELESTATS services in 1986 with the delivery of foreign trade statistics which comprises cross classified tabulations of imports, clearances or exports data tailored to the individual needs of subscribing customers. The proven viability of the TELESTATS technology, known as the Special Returns Service, has enabled the ABS to make its monthly and quarterly main economic indicator publications electronically available to subscribers.

'It is rather like a shop from which subscribers can purchase statistical products 24 hours a day from any location in Australia and from almost any location in the world,' said Mr Damcevski in his paper to the Sydney conference.

He added that among other dissemination methods in use is facsimile delivery while 'simultaneous fax' facilities are currently being evaluated. Computer printout was offered as another form of dissemination although its usefulness was limited, particularly where large volumes of statistics were involved, because of production and delivery costs and the difficulty of bulk handling.

Mr Damcevski said the ABS also used microfiche extensively to disseminate high volume tabulated material. It was well suited for use by libraries because of its durability, simplicity of access and the relatively low cost of equipment required for its storage and use.

Magnetic tape was the most commonly used medium for disseminating data in computer readable form. But while it could handle large volumes of data it required space-consuming libraries and mainframe or minicomputer technology for user access.

The ABS also provided statistical services on floppy discs. This was the most common method to meet demand for relatively small volumes of data.

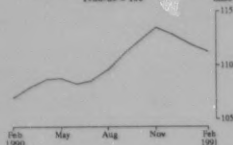
Mr Damcevski said perhaps the most innovative of non online services was the Compact Disc Read Only Memory (CD-ROM). It is essentially the same as the audio compact discs used for recording and playing music.

Each CD-ROM could store up to 550 Mb of data, roughly the equivalent of 1,500 floppy discs, 16 magnetic tapes or a stack of A4 paper six stories high. He said CD-ROM was an appropriate medium for dealing with large, static databases such as annually or less frequently updated matter. But the pre-mastering and mastering production phases could be relatively expensive, and a minimum customer base of at least 50 was necessary to keep the final price within reasonable limits.

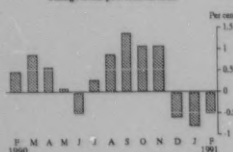
Mr Damcevski said ABS online and CD-ROM data delivery techniques were technically appealing and could fairly be described as revolutionising data distribution.

For further information contact Jack Harries on (06) 252 6205.

PRICES OF MANUFACTURED GOODS
1988-89 = 100



Change from previous month



Further decreases in prices of manufactured goods

Prices of manufactured goods fell by 0.5 per cent in February 1991, following falls of 0.6 per cent and 0.8 per cent in December and January.

The fall was again mainly due to lower prices for refined petroleum products, reflecting falls in world oil prices. Lower prices for non-ferrous metals and alumina also contributed to the fall in the index. These decreases, along with less significant falls for about one quarter of the items in the index, were partly offset by small price rises for about half of the items.

The All Manufacturing Industry Index rose by 4.0 per cent between February 1990 and February 1991, down substantially on the annual changes recorded in the last few months.

The table below shows a large variation in the rate of price change between the various sectors of manufacturing.

PRICES OF MANUFACTURED GOODS, FEBRUARY 1991
Percentage change

Manufacturing sector	From previous month	From corresponding month of previous year
Petroleum products	- 10.3	15.7
Chemical products	0.5	6.3
Fabricated metal products	- 0.2	4.9
Transport equipment	0.2	4.2
Clothing and footwear	1.1	3.4
Other industrial machinery and equipment	0.2	3.4
Food, beverages and tobacco	0.4	2.6
Basic metal products	- 1.7	0.3
Total manufacturing	- 0.5	4.0

For further information, order the publication *Price Indexes of Articles Produced by Manufacturing Industry, Australia (6412.0)*, or contact Peter Cordy on (06) 252 5541.

This week in brief ...

Foreign investment

December quarter 1990

Australia's net foreign liabilities at 31 December 1990 totalled \$173,678 million, up \$426 million or 0.2 per cent on the position at the end of September.

Net foreign debt of \$130,889 million accounted for 75 per cent of the level of net foreign liabilities at 31 December 1990.

Net investment income payable abroad during the December quarter was \$4,419 million, up \$911 million, or 26 per cent, on the amount payable in the September quarter.

Source: *Foreign Investment, Australia, December Quarter 1990 (5306.0)*.

Inquiries

The ABS supplies a wide range of statistical information:

- through its bookshops
- by mail order (including subscription)
- by facsimile
- electronically.

To order any of the publications that appear in *Statistics Weekly* or to inquire about the statistics and services available from the ABS, contact Information Services at any of the offices listed below. An Information Consultancy Service in each office provides assistance of a more extensive or complex nature.

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Suggestions

Any suggestions for improvement to this publication should be addressed to:

Robert Nixon
Editor
Statistics Weekly
(06) 252 6104

Statistics Weekly
2 May 1991

All the week's releases: 24 to 30 April

General

Catalogue of Electronic Products, 1991 (1111.0; free) — *new issue*
Statistics Weekly, 26 April 1991 (1318.0; \$4.00)
Australian Economic Indicators, April 1991 (1350.0; \$24.00)
Monthly Summary of Statistics, NSW, April 1991 (1305.1; \$13.50)
Economic Indicators, NSW, April 1991 (1307.1; \$5.00)
Monthly Summary of Statistics, Vic., April 1991 (1303.2; \$10.00)
Monthly Summary of Statistics, Qld, April 1991 (1304.3; \$9.00)
Economic Indicators, WA, April 1991 (1307.5; \$5.50)
Monthly Summary of Statistics, SA, April 1991 (1303.4; \$9.00)
South Aust. at a Glance, 1991 (1306.4; free)
Tasmanian Statistical Indicators, April 1991 (1303.6; \$9.00)

Census of Population and Housing

1991 Census of Population and Housing: How Aust. Takes a Census, 1991 (2903.0; free) — *new issue*

Demography

Perinatal Deaths, NSW, 1989 (3303.1; \$7.60) — *final issue*

Social statistics

First Home Buyers 1988–1990, Aust., Preliminary (4135.0; free)
— *new issue*
Awareness of Emergency Services, Tas., October 1989 (4511.6; \$8.00)
— *new issue*

National accounts, finance and foreign trade

Foreign Investment, Aust., December Qtr 1990 (5306.0; \$16.50)
Cash Management Trusts, Aust., March 1991 (5635.0; \$4.50)
Lease Finance, Aust., February 1991 (5644.0; \$5.50)
Local Government, Qld, 1989–90 (5502.3; \$16.50)

Labour statistics and prices

Price Index of Materials Used in Building Other Than House Building, Eight Capital Cities, February 1991 (6407.0; \$10.00)
Price Index of Materials Used in House Building, Six State Capital Cities and Canberra, February 1991 (6408.0; \$7.50)
Price Indexes of Materials Used in Manufacturing Industries, Aust., February 1991 (6411.0; \$10.00)
Price Indexes of Articles Produced by Manufacturing Industry, Aust., February 1991 (6412.0; \$10.00)
The Labour Force, NSW, February Qtr 1991 (6201.1; \$14.50)
The Labour Force, Vic., February Qtr 1991 (6202.2; \$8.50)
The Labour Force, Qld, February Qtr 1991 (6201.3; \$14.50)

Agriculture

Agricultural Land Use and Selected Inputs, Qld, 1989–90 (7411.3; \$15.00)

Secondary industry and distribution

Research and Experimental Development, Business Enterprises (Inter Year Survey), Aust., 1989–90 (8114.0; \$12.50)
Manufacturing Production, Aust., March 1991, Preliminary (8301.0; \$10.00)
Manufacturing Production, Aust.: Energy Products, February 1991 (8368.0; \$4.50)
Construction Activity at Constant Prices, Aust., December Qtr 1990 (8782.0; \$10.00)
Building Approvals, Vic., March 1991 (8731.2; \$10.00)
Dwelling Unit Commencements Reported by Approving Authorities, Vic., February 1991 (8741.2; \$10.00)
Tourist Accommodation, SA, December Qtr 1990 (8635.4; \$10.00)
Dwelling Unit Commencements Reported by Approving Authorities, SA, January 1991 (8741.4; \$10.00)
Manufacturing Establishments, NT, 1988–89 (8206.7; \$5.00)
Tourist Accommodation, NT, December Qtr 1990 (8635.7; \$10.00)
Building Approvals, NT, March 1991 (8731.7; \$5.50)

Transport

Registrations of New Motor Vehicles, Aust., March 1991, Preliminary (9301.0; \$10.00)
Motor Vehicle Registrations, Vic., March 1991 (9303.2; \$10.00)
Motor Vehicle Registrations, Qld, March 1991 (9303.3; \$10.00)

Calendar of key releases

Expected releases over the fortnight to 14 May 1991

May

- 2 Building Approvals, Australia, March 1991 (8731.0; \$12.50)
- 6 Balance of Payments, Australia, March 1991 (5301.0; \$15.00)
- 9 The Labour Force, Australia, Preliminary, April 1991 (6202.0; \$10.00)

Feature article

A removable supplement is included in this issue between pages 4 and 5. This contains a feature on electronic dissemination as part of an occasional series and a synopsis of *Statistics Weekly* articles released in April 1991.

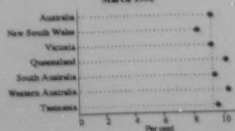
The latest ...

Changes to key State indicators — consolidated to
30 April 1991

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Aust.
— Percentage change from same period previous year —									
New capital expenditure (Sept. qtr 90)*	-0.9	-10.9	5.4	11.2	-17.9	37.2	n.a.	n.a.	-3.4
Retail turnover (Feb. 91) (trend estimate)	3.4	-2.4	4.6	8.8	2.2	6.3	n.a.	9.5	2.8
New motor vehicle registrations (March 91)†	-20.2	-58.9	-9.0	-13.7	-20.5	-28.0	-29.3	-24.1	-29.8
Number of dwelling unit approvals (Feb. 91)	-7.8	-21.1	1.8	-7.4	-17.7	-9.0	-30.5	-54.1	-11.1
Value of total building work done (Dec. qtr 90)	2.5	-11.1	-23.0	9.6	-25.5	-24.7	11.4	5.3	-8.5
Employed persons (March 91)*	-0.4	-4.0	-1.5	-0.1	-1.8	-0.3	-0.5	5.3	-1.6
Capital city consumer price index (Dec. qtr 90)	6.4	7.4	6.2	7.8	7.4	6.1	7.1	6.8	6.9
Average weekly earnings (full-time adult ordinary time) (November 90)	6.8	7.1	9.9	8.3	7.9	6.6	9.8	8.7	7.5
Population (Sept. 90)	1.1	1.4	2.4	1.1	2.3	1.1	0.9	2.5	1.5
Room nights in licensed hotels and motels, etc (Sept. qtr 90)	3.2	0.1	6.5	1.8	0.8	23.5	7.4	20.9	4.2

* Seasonally adjusted except for NT and ACT. † Seasonally adjusted except for Tas., NT and ACT.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
Seasonally adjusted
March 1991



Key national indicators – consolidated to 30 April 1991

		Period	Latest figure available		Percentage change (a) on	
			Original	Seasonally adjusted	Previous period	Corresponding period last year
National production						
Gross domestic product	— current prices	\$m Dec. qtr 90	101,082	95,247	1.3	3.4
	— 1984-85 prices		70,031	64,725	0.6	0.6
Industrial activity						
New capital expenditure	— current prices	\$m Dec. qtr 90	7,305	6,612	3.2	-10.6
	— 1984-85 prices		5,542	5,021	3.6	-10.3
Expected new capital expenditure		Three months to Dec. 90	8,311	n.a.	n.a.	-5.7
Retail turnover	— current prices	" February 91	6,365	7,250	0.1	3.5
	— 1984-85 prices	" Dec. qtr 90	16,480	14,620	-1.6	-1.6
New motor vehicle registrations		March 91	39,880	39,077	-9.4	-29.8
Dwelling unit approvals (e)		February 91	9,860	10,474	-2.9	-11.2
Value of all building approvals (e)			1,915	2,212	32.6	-3.4
Value of total building work done	— current prices	" Dec. qtr 90	7,391	7,069	0.5	-8.5
	— 1984-85 prices	" "	4,654	4,452	0.1	-10.9
Manufacturers' sales	— current prices	" Dec. qtr 90	36,754	35,064	1.0	-1.0
	— 1984-85 prices	" "	23,318	24,154	0.0	-3.0
Expected manufacturers' sales		Six months to June 91	70,139	n.a.	n.a.	-1.8
Labour						
Employed persons (e)		'000 March 91	7,746.5	7,710.1	-1.1	-1.6
Unemployment rate † (e)		% "	9.6	9.2	0.5	3.0
Participation rate † (e)		" "	63.8	63.2	-0.4	-0.1
Job vacancies		'000 November 90	34.1	35.4	-27.8	-45.6
Average weekly overtime per employee		hours "	1.3	1.3	-1.9	-16.2
Prices, profits and wages						
Consumer price index	1980-81 = 100.0	Dec. qtr 90	214.5	n.a.	2.7	6.9
Price index of materials used in manufacturing industries	1984-85 = 100.0	February 91	121.5	n.a.	-3.3	0.6
Price index of articles produced by manufacturing industry	1988-89 = 100.0	February 91	119.3	n.a.	-0.5	4.0
Company profits before income tax	\$m	Dec. qtr 90	4,640	3,911	15.9	4.8
Average weekly earnings (Full-time adults; ordinary time)	\$	November 90	555.60	n.a.	2.7	7.5
Interest rates (b) (monthly average)						
90-day bank bills †	% per annum	March 91	11.60	n.a.	-0.05	-3.85
10-year Treasury bonds †	"	"	11.40	n.a.	0.15	-2.05
Balance of payments						
Exports of merchandise	\$m	February 91	4,271	4,452	4.8	6.6
Imports of merchandise	"	"	3,981	4,274	1.6	4.6
Balance on merchandise trade (c)	"	"	290	178	323.8	97.8
Balance of goods and services (c)	"	"	-1,230	-73	62.0	62.9
Balance on current account (c)	"	"	n.a.	-1,434	12.8	0.3
Terms of trade (d)	1984-85 = 100.0	Dec. qtr 90	n.a.	97.9	-5.8	-9.3
Foreign investment						
Net foreign debt	\$m	30 Dec. 90	130,771	n.a.	1.9	6.7
Net foreign liabilities	"	"	172,363	n.a.	0.4	5.6
Exchange rates (monthly average)						
\$US	per \$A	February 91	0.7843	n.a.	0.7	3.2
Trade weighted index	May 1970 = 100.0	"	57.3	n.a.	-0.5	-2.2
Other indicators						
Population (resident at end of qtr)	million	Sept. 90	17.1	n.a.	0.4	1.5
Overseas visitor arrivals	'000	October 90	191	188	-1.4	12.9

(a) Based on seasonally adjusted figures where available. (b) Source: Reserve Bank of Australia. (c) For percentage changes, a minus sign indicates an increase in the deficit; no sign means a decrease in the deficit or an increase in the surplus. (d) The ratio of the price of goods and services for exports to that for imports. (e) Later figures expected to be released Thursday, 2 May 1991.
 NOTES: † = change is shown in terms of percentage points. n.a. = not available.
 Figures have been taken from a variety of ABS publications. Copies may be obtained from Information Services (see page 6).
 Some of the figures shown are preliminary, some final, and some are revisions of previously published figures. Users should check the latest relevant publication or with the ABS Information Services if the status of the statistic is important.

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